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SUBJECT: AUSTRIAN MFA ON BURMA AT EU-ASEAN SUMMIT

REF: STATE 148528

Classified By: Econ/Pol Couns Dean Yap. Reason: 1.4(b) and (d)

Econ/Pol Couns reviewed discussed reftel requests Oct. 31 with Bernhard Zimburg, Austrian MFA Acting Director for Asian Affairs. Zimburg reported that EU members had not yet begun to discuss in detail their message on Burma for the EU-ASEAN Summit, but emphasized that it would, along the lines of the October 15 GAERC conclusions, be explicitly critical of the regime's behavior and stress the need for democratic change. The specifics would be worked out based on the results of the Senior Officials Meeting now underway in Beijing (Zimburg noted that the EU was very skeptical of the "optimistic" line being peddled by China) and the results of the mid-November visit to Burma by Special Advisor Gambari. Zimburg ruled out, however, an EU effort to exclude or minimize Burmese participation in the EU-ASEAN Summit. Burma, he said, had long been a "bone of contention" between the EU and ASEAN and the two had worked out a modus vivendi: Burma would attend and determine its own representation, but Burma would also always be on the agenda and the Burmese would be obliged to listen to what Zimburg described as sometimes very harsh criticism from the EU side. But EU insistence on excluding the Burmese would lead to cancellation of the Summit.
Kilner